# 5. Personal and Professional Responsibilities

## Introduction

Interpretation helps archeologists to fulfill their professional and ethical responsibilities through facilitating opportunities for the public to connect to the meanings of archeological resources. Rather than storing the results of archeological research in the library and collections facility where very few will hear about it, interpretation makes known what we know about the past and how we came to know it. It provides archeologists with opportunities to make creative and interesting contributions to the public's experience of a place. It educates people on what archeology is and what archeologists do, and it leads them to understand the purposes and meanings of archeological work to their own lives.

**Archeologist Alden Hayes conducts a party of visitors on a tour of Casa Grande in 1957.** (George W. Gottmer)

The professional responsibilities of archeologists in the National Parks involves finding ways to integrate their work into the larger body of work going on at their park. They can help other interpreters, naturalists, historians, managers, and other staff to realize the potential benefits of archeological work. If archeology is how modern people "touch" the past, and interpretation is the "bridge" between the past and the present, then archeologists are charged with the responsibility of bringing forth the stories of time, place, and situation.

Please consider interpretation not as something you have to do or an obligation to fulfill, but as a way to tap your own creativity and intelligence! Interpretation is a terrific application for your work that gets people excited and involved, puts you in new situations, and keeps you thinking in fresh ways about the history of your park.

### For Your Information

How do interpreters find their own connections with and come to care about the resources they interpret? Your colleagues said:

> "I first came to care for the fort as part of my job. Then, as I learned the stories, I came to care about it. When I realized the people who lived in the past were like us now I came to see the fort as a representation of those people."
>
> "More than being told it was special, I needed to discover it on my own."

## Professional Responsibilities

Both interpreters and archeologists should be aware of the range of our responsibilities to visitors, associated communities, and the resources themselves. Interpreters and interpretation, archeologists and archeology work together in an open dialogue about the meanings of resources and the methods to impart their relevance to visitors. Interpreters know how important it is to consider the audience and the most effective ways to communicate. Archeologists are aware of the demanding ethical standards of their profession and the definitions and contexts for archeological materials. Together, they can design effective interpretations that promote stewardship and reach all parts of the interested public.

What makes a profession?

- Public service with social responsibility

- Research-based foundation of knowledge
- Specialized education and training
- Responsibility of practitioners for application of standards
- Programs of accreditation and certification
- Established codes of ethics
- Life-long learning

Archeologists are researchers into the past who may find themselves in front of a classroom of dig-happy fifth graders, a mixed crowd of summertime vacationers, or even a group of lobbyists and politicians. The interpretations of archeology enable professionals to discuss what they do and generate further public interest in it. It is through communicating what you do and showing why it is significant that you fulfill your responsibilities to the public's curiosity.

**A student learns about taking appropriate notes for archeological work.** (NPS)

One of the responsibilities of interpreters of archeology is to provide accurate and balanced information about multiple perspectives, but also to recognize that this kind of interpretation is a tool that allows for respect and communication. Interpreters must set aside their own passions or preferences for a particular point of view to allow the audience to form their own beliefs. This can be a difficult thing to do, but know that it is important for enabling people to form their own beliefs and for cultivating a safe place for people to discuss their beliefs without feeling judged. As archeologists in national parks, we facilitate the public's relationship with resources and the information provided by them.

You are responsible for taking advantage of interpretive opportunities. Remember that the interpretation of archeological meanings reflects not only your own work, but represents the role of your park and the NPS in providing professional leadership on cultural resources management. To affect the profession, you must first affect a memorable change within visitors, moving them to see a kaleidoscope of meanings with critical and wondering eyes. It's up to you to provide opportunities for emotional and intellectual connections to the meanings of the resource, while allowing the leap of caring and concern to belong to visitors.

## Fun Facts

In 1940 NPS archeologist Dale King advised the custodians of the Southwestern National Monuments:

> We must not herd our charges like a group of cattle. We must present our wares so enticingly that the visitor himself desires to partake of them … And if there are visitors who wish to make their way undisturbed by formal guides and guiding, we must perfect a technique so that these "untouchables" are unruffled by the little man who is there in the green uniform. …

In "Scope and Function of the Interpretation Program of the Southwestern National Monuments," in Report of Meeting of Custodians, Southwestern National Monuments, Feb. 14-16, 1940, History Division, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

## For Your Information

**Society for American Archaeology Training Opportunities**
Many training opportunities exist among professional organizations. The SAA posts them online.

**My Learning Manager**
Within the NPS, My Learning Manager provides information about training and development opportunities.

## For Your Information

**The Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA)**
RPA Code of Conduct and Standards of Research Performance

**The Society for American Archaeology (SAA)**
SAA Principles of Archaeological Ethics

**The Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA)**
SHA Ethics Statement

**The Archaeological Institute of America (AIA)**
AIA Code of Ethics

## Finding the –ologist in the Archeologist

Archeologists' personal obligations are individual and diverse. Maybe you see yourself as an educator, a dispeller of myths, an active participant in the creation of knowledge? It may sound simplistic, but archeologists are people too, and your visitors may be interested to hear about a day in your shoes. Having a reflexive sense of your personal obligations and a set of goals to carry out can provide important guidance and motivation for an interpretive program.

## For Your Information

An archeologist inspired this interpreter:

> "During an archeologist's lecture, the landscape became a living thing, not just a bunch of isolated things or sites. It wasn't just the information he gave, but the passion too. It was a born-again moment for me. I saw my resource differently and started caring for it. It re-energized me!"

**An archeologist shows artifacts to visitors at Petersburg National Battlefield.** (Gail Brown, University of Maryland)

The presentation of yourself and the interest in the work can contribute significantly to personalizing a presentation and helping visitors understand archeology as an accessible discipline. Take the opportunity to talk about how you became interested in archeology, what brought you to the park, and discuss what keeps you there. Or think about the kinds of questions visitors tend to ask, such as "Have you found anything good today?," as an opportunity to demonstrate what is really valuable or interesting from your perspective. Maybe you haven't found a perfect Clovis point or a Spanish medallion or, for that matter, gold, but the stratification of an area poses an unexpected puzzle or the big picture at your excavation changes the known history of a site. Think creatively about answering questions in order to get your audience thinking archeologically!

## Use What You Know

Why did you become an archeologist? What inspired you?

## For Your Information

Public archeology programs in the United States fuse the sense of responsibility on the part of archeologists with public interest.

**Archaeology and Public Education**
The online newsletter of the Society for American Archaeology Public Education Committee publishes articles and case studies about professional experiences with the public.

**Public Archaeology Facility, Binghamton University, SUNY**
The archeology program at the PAF combines professional practice with community outreach. The program description gives ideas for creating a mission for interpretive programs and ideas for reaching the public.

## Case Study

Working with the public is rewarding, but navigating the administrative systems to develop programs is not easy. Read Patrice L. Jeppson's article, "Pitfalls, Pratfalls and Pragmatism in Public Archaeology" to learn about how one archeologist found the motivation to continue her work in public archeology despite a host of problems facing the field.

Patrice L. Jeppson, Pitfalls, Pratfalls and Pragmatism in Public Archaeology.

## Making Jargon-free Archeology Presentations

Stratigraphy, GIS, STP, assemblage, phytoliths…archeology has a unique vocabulary that can be incomprehensible to the untrained ear. While many park visitors are interested in learning about archeology and the methods that archeologists use, the jargon they encounter at archeological sites or in archeological publications may overwhelm and intimidate them.

Archeologists and interpreters should identify visitors' level of archeological understanding and tailor verbal and media presentations accordingly. Archeological terms and methods can be described using familiar words, concepts, and illustrations when possible. While archeologists and interpreters should not avoid using technical archeological terms during a presentation to a lay audience, they should immediately define the term or concept to ensure visitor understanding.

**An interpreter presents a Parks as Classrooms program at Whitman Mission National Historic Site.** (NPS)

## Identifying educational components in archeological research

Archeologists seek to answer some of the most basic questions people have about past cultures, family groups, and individuals. An archeological research design includes questions that, if answered, will allow the archeologists to interpret data and its meaning. Research designs may identify educational components that address interpreters' and the public's basic questions about how archeology is done and what it means.

## Five Simple Educational Concepts

Whether the interpreter or archeologist presents archeological information to park visitors at a battlefield, pueblo, historic house or exhibit, he or she may wish to design the presentation around five simple concepts (Ellick 2000:187-188):

**What is archeology?**
This topic should include discussions of archeology, archeological sites, features, artifacts and collections, and behavioral inferences.

**What is culture?**
Archeologists study the past by systematically recording and analyzing their material remains to determine how people met biological, social, political, economic, technological, and psychological needs.

**Where and how did people live?**
This leads to discussion of human needs for food, water, shelter, as well as resource use at the site. This also leads to discussions about group dynamics, ethnicity, gender, and power resistance.

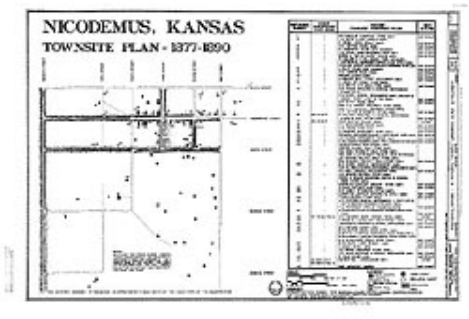
**What are the steps of the archeological process?**
This leads to a discussion of how archeologists recover, analyze and share information about a site, from initial research to artifact analysis to report writing. It may also include discussions about working with other professional specialists, such as geologists, soil scientists, materials scientists, educators, curators, and conservators.

**Preservation**
Visitors should leave every interpretive program inspired to protect and preserve archeological resources.

## For Your Information

**Educational Resources for Archaeologists and Educators**
This web site accesses resources recommended by the Society for American Archaeology's Public Education Committee and the Task Force on Curriculum.

## Interpreting "Untold Stories"




**This 1877 circular promoted Nicodemus, Kansas. Nicodemus National Historic Site tells the story of the only remaining western town established by African Americans after the Civil War.** (NPS)

The NPS Untold Stories initiative focuses on telling the stories of people who were previously excluded from interpretations. Over the history of the NPS, interpretation has changed to address the range of perspectives brought by the awareness of cultural diversity. But in some cases, park programs have not adequately interpreted to the general public the less-known roles.

Archeology and interpretation can work together to bring forth these "untold stories." Archeological research and survey at many NPS sites contribute information about less well-known populations. Some of this work alters traditional knowledge about a site, acknowledges or integrates the perspective of an under-heard group, or emphasizes the relevance of national park sites to the modern public.

The interpretation of cultural diversity, particularly of a tradition of under-representation, can evoke strong feelings in visitors. We recommend that you consider the chapter further along in this guide entitled, "What Are Issues of Sensitivity?" when constructing your program.

## Case Study

**Sand Creek Massacre, Sand Creek National Historic Site**

On November 29, 1864, Colonel John M. Chivington led approximately 700 U.S. volunteer soldiers to a village of about 500 Cheyenne and Arapaho people camped along the banks of Big Sandy Creek in southeastern Colorado. Although the Cheyenne and Arapaho people believed they were under the protection of the U.S. Army, Chivington's troops attacked and killed about 150 people, mainly women, children, and the elderly. The massacre was ultimately condemned following three federal investigations.

The National Park Service collaborated with Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes to document oral histories of the massacre with the particular goal of locating the site. Forensic archeologists found the site a mile north of where oral history placed it. The distribution of ammunition confirmed that the tribes accurately described the attack as a surprise. The tribes and archeologists worked together to negotiate ways to manage the archeological collections of human remains to be as sensitive to the tribes as possible and as guided by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which was developed to change past practices toward the collection of ancestral remains. This work has helped support the wider public's undestanding of the Native American position on the massacre of their people.

The Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site was authorized by Public Law 106-465 on November 7, 2000. The Act recognizes the national significance of the massacre in American history, and its ongoing significance to the Cheyenne and Arapaho people and descendents of the massacre victims.

## Case Study

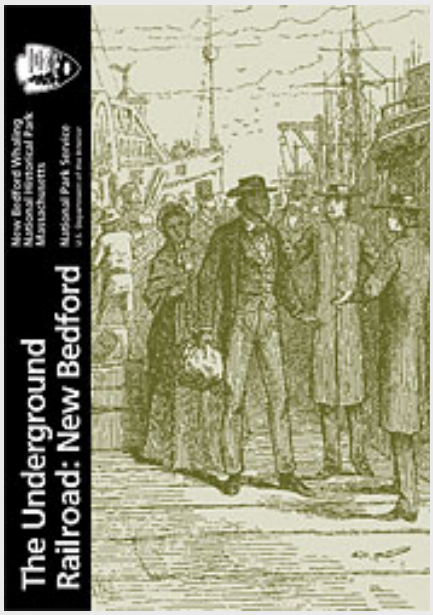
Many other National Park sites provide examples of untold stories without archeology. Take a look at the following examples as a guide for putting together stories for your own site.

**The Underground Railroad: New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park**

Visitors to New Bedford can follow a self-guided tour around the town to find out about African Americans who joined the whaling industry to hide from slavery. Visitors learn about the untold history of the region from the very places it took place – wharves, properties, streets.

According to the tour brochure, people who claimed to know something of the Underground Railroad's operation at the time estimated that from three hundred to seven hundred fugitives lived in New Bedford between the mid 1840s and 1860 – a sizable presence in a town of around 1,000 people. African Americans came to New Bedford to take advantage of the profitable whaling industry, to escape and travel along the extensive commercial waterway network, to live in a tolerant atmosphere, and to join other African Americans settled there.

Whites were moving away from the water and into industrial jobs. Fugitive slaves filled a need for labor on the whaling boats. On the State Pier, the first stop of the tour, visitors look out over a wharf where those who escaped slavery on casting vessels first set foot on free soil. African Americans stepped from the wharf on to boats where they were virtually assured that they would not be pursued and returned to slavery. One African American named John W. Thompson admitted to his captain:




**A brochure from New Bedford NHP tells the story of the Underground Railroad.** (New Bedford NHP)

> "I am a fugitive slave from Maryland, and have a family in Philadelphia, but fearing to remain there any longer, I thought I would go on a whaling voyage, as being the place where I stood least chance of being arrested by slave hunters."

The untold story of New Bedford's whaling industry speaks of the resistance of African Americans to slavery and the choices they made to escape it. It suggests the universal needs of people for acceptance and community, as well as for the feelings of safety, freedom, and engagement that make us human.

## Case Studies

Use the following case studies as examples of untold stories:

**Cornelia Sexauer, Untold Stories – Women in Civil War History**
The Civil War is traditionally discussed in terms of men's contributions. Women, however, played important roles as nurses, educators, and supporters for the troops. Take a look at this article for ideas on ways to expand the interpretation of a common history.

**Hornbek Homestead, Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument**
Florissant Fossil Bends NM was preserved for its fossils, which have mostly been removed. A historic homestead site, however, is preserved and tells a valuable story about life in the area for the female pioneer Adeline Hornbek in Colorado. The web site for the Hornbek Homestead includes a virtual tour, history, and educational programs to get the story out.

**Marshall Hotel, Yellowstone National Park**
When you think of Yellowstone, cultural remains or underwater archeology might not be the first things you associate with the park. The Marshall-Firehole Hotel was a crude hotel built in 1884 in Yellowstone National Park and operated until 1891. The Marshall-Firehole Hotel archeological site is arguably one of the more important cultural resources relating to the National Park system's developmental history. It was the first facility of its kind built within a National Park strictly to serve tourists. Thus, the site directly addresses one of the National Park Service's fundamental purposes - to provide for the enjoyment of park resources and values by people of the United States.

## For Your Information

**Our Shared History** gathers sites related to African American heritage across the NPS web site.

**Stories to Tell: African American History in Your Parks** presents stories from the parks chosen as starting points for the Untold Stories project.

**Cultural Resource Diversity Program**
The Cultural Resource Diversity Program provides many examples of diversity in the National Parks.

**Peoples and Cultures**
The Ethnography program's web pages talk about what ethnographers do and the kinds of projects that can benefit from their work.

## Case Study

**Archeology of the Battle of Little Bighorn**
What really happened at the Battle of Little Bighorn? No white settlers survived to tell their side and the perspective of the Native Americans who fought and delivered a stunning defeat to the troops led by General George A. Custer was discounted. An archeological re-interpretation considers what transpired.

**Use What You Know: *Assess Your Knowledge* (#5 of 10)**

- What "untold stories" are – or might be better – interpreted at your park?
- How has archeology at your park contributed a perspective on cultural diversity that other forms of research did not?
- How can you use archeological evidence to illustrate these stories to the public?

## Interpreting controversy

The interpretation of controversy can be an uncomfortable experience for the interpreter and the audience alike. But it is a vital technique for addressing the multiple meanings of cultural resources to various perspectives and discussing the rich diversity in the stories preserved by national parks. The presence of controversy can stimulate dialogue amongst the audience members and with the interpreter and can provide opportunities for audiences to form their own emotional and intellectual connections to resource meanings. Controversial topics in interpretation can enrich a program in important ways.

"Traditional" or safe, fact-based descriptions of park events may proscribe a particular viewpoint at the expense of others and discourage personal investment in the telling of a story. And no, you don't want to incite a riot, but interpreters do have a responsibility to provoke audiences into thinking and feeling. Interpretation is not about re-enforcing or catering to a particular point of view or to what the audience may want to hear. Beware that you cannot impose new perspectives or meanings on visitors. You can, however, approach controversy as a means to provide opportunities for ways of considering resources that visitors may not have thought about before. As our nation changes, as the NPS shifts the focus of its work to reflect public interests and needs, so does interpretation need to adapt to incorporate newer ways of approaching factual and thematic material in reflection of the public interest.

Because controversial topics are practically by definition emotional ones, controversy can cultivate the stewardship ethic that is a desirable outcome of archeology interpretation. When a resource is controversial, it is also relevant – people care about it and may as a result care for it. But interpreting controversy takes planning and practice. Interpreters must respect and acknowledge the rights of audience members to hold and maintain their own beliefs. With experience you will learn how to effectively apply interpretive tools to disarm flareups and allow different perspectives to emerge.

Keep these parameters in mind for interpreting controversial topics through archeology:

- Think broadly to connect multiple resource meanings to a diverse set of audience perspectives.
- Gain a sense of your audience before interpreting controversy by asking a few get-to-know-you questions.
- Try to apply what you know about your audience to the delivery of the presentation. Use any existing audience meanings or perspectives that you can to establish relevance and comfort before introducing new material. Begin from the standpoint of adding new perspectives, but do not attempt to replace existing audience views with new ones. Try not to deliver new material that will encourage controversy in a way to offend or make audiences feel threatened or under attack.
- Use accurate and respectful language that identifies the perspective from which information is presented.
- Treat each audience perspectives with respect. Acknowledge diversity.

### Use What You Know

Think about how to apply the Interpretive Equation to integrating controversy into an archeology interpretation program. The equation can help you anticipate situations and prepare to interpret controversy with effectiveness. Research all potential resource meanings (KR) and potential audience perspectives (KA). Identify specific ways to link multiple resource meanings with audience perspectives and convey them through appropriate interpretive opportunities (IO).

## Promoting Archeological Stewardship

Among interpreters' greatest professional and personal responsibilities is ensuring public support for the protection of irreplaceable archeological resources. Through interpretive and education programs archeologists and interpreters should develop strong public support and stewardship for increased protection of archeological resources nationwide. The goals of such public outreach in the parks are to:

- Foster a feeling of ownership of and responsibility for our common heritage
- Increase public understanding of archeology
- Enhance public awareness of current problems involving archeological resources such as looting
- Increase understanding of how the public's actions affect archeological resources, and
- Increase public involvement in legitimate archeological activities.

Several successful park programs exist to meet these goals, such as Glen Canyon National Recreation Area's brochure, “House Rules for Visiting Archeological Sites,” and their Cultural Site Steward Program. Arizona's award-winning Public Archaeology Program is an example of a successful effort to win the public's interest, support, and participation in preserving our archeological heritage at the state level.

### Case Study

**House Rules for Visiting Archeological Sites**
At this web site find Glen Canyon National Recreation Area's creative solution to educating visitors about the proper treatment of archeological sites.

Providing opportunities for appropriate public enjoyment is an important part of a park's mission. National Park Service Management Policies make it clear that the Service encourages visitor activities that can be sustained without causing unacceptable impacts to park resources or values. However, the NPS won't allow activities that impair those resources. In some cases, this may mean that some archeological sites, for example, may be placed off-limits to visitation in order to protect them. Such restrictions present an interpretative opportunity to explain reasons for the restrictions to visitors and to the public. The message of stewardship and long-term preservation of important places can be imparted where off-site interpretations are the only option. In such cases, classroom or virtual visits may provide excellent alternatives for communicating the value of endangered sites.

**Young visitors learn to care about archeology by doing it.** (Cuyahoga Valley NP, MWAC)

In some cases, the location, or other information, about archeological sites may be kept confidential and not shared with visitors or the public. There is legal support in both the National Historic Preservation Act and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act for restricting information about archeological sites if releasing that information would cause a significant invasion of privacy; risk harm to the resource; or impede the use of a traditional religious site by practitioners.

## For Your Information

**Cultural Resources Management**
The CRM chapter of the Archeology for Interpreters online guide outlines the role of the profession.

**Caring for Sites**
Archeological stewardship refers to a preservation movement that focuses on protecting and maintaining archeological sites for future generations.

**Protecting the Past**
This online book presents some of the current thinking and ongoing work in the field of archeological resource protection.

**Arizona Archaeology Week: Promoting the Past to the Public**
This Technical Brief describes how Arizona's innovative Archaeology Week program was developed.

## Use What You Know: *Assess Your Knowledge* (#6 of 10)

- Choose a controversial topic at your park that the archeological perspective may enhance.
- Use the interpretive equation and the interpretive process model to outline a strategy.
- List audiences, multiple perspectives, multiple resources, and possible approaches.
- Imagine the responses and write out answers to visitors who challenge the approach of multiple perspectives on controversial material.

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